



SOST Coastal Resilience Workshop

Summary Brief

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On Tuesday June 15, 2021, the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology (SOST) hosted a Coastal Resilience Workshop. This virtual event convened over 400 Federal agency representatives across 27 agencies to strengthen and build the Federal community required to address our most pressing coastal resilience needs.

This workshop was motivated by the need to ensure the resilience of our coasts in the face of rapid environmental change and increasing risk from climate change to coastal systems and the services they provide. Our coasts are economic engines for the Nation; focal regions for development and growth; and home to lands, waters, and resources of unique national value. The workshop identified Federal interests, capabilities, and ongoing activities related to coastal resilience and focused on how to build sustained collaborations that increase the impact of each contributing agency.

Dr Jane Lubchenco, Deputy Director for Climate and Environment from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, provided a welcoming keynote address. In her remarks, she called for a science-based approach to coastal resilience rooted in partnerships across Federal agencies, sectors, and communities.

“Coasts offer powerful opportunities for adaptation and mitigation, and we urgently need both. We have a golden opportunity to jumpstart the recovery of coastal economies from the pandemic while also strengthening coastal resilience, using both built infrastructure and nature-based approaches. The Administration’s plan to build back better seeks to create millions of new jobs and rebuild our country’s infrastructure in both sustainable and equitable ways.” – Jane Lubchenco

Brenda Mallory, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), welcomed participants and introduced a new Coastal Resilience Interagency Working Group (IWG). The Coastal Resilience IWG will be co-led by CEQ and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to align Federal strengths in a whole-of-government approach to coastal resilience. The IWG will also coordinate major Federal involvement in coastal resilience activities and support strategies with U.S. state, local, Tribal, and territorial governments for effective and equitable investments. In her remarks, Chair Mallory stressed the opportunity for nature-based solutions to climate change and focused on finding ways to mobilize and coordinate Federal resources to meet the needs of the communities most at risk from the impacts of climate change.

“It is critical that the Administration’s coastal resilience efforts include a key focus on our communities along the coasts. To me that is what this work is about, protecting families and neighborhoods and preserving a sense of safety and home. Solutions are attainable, including nature-based infrastructure and blue-carbon ecosystems, but it takes strategic planning by and in communities to build their resilience to the impacts of climate change. We need to work together to ensure that vulnerable communities have the opportunity to fully participate in planning for these threats.” – Brenda Mallory



Elizabeth Klein, Senior Counselor to the Secretary at the Department of the Interior, shared plenary remarks on coastal resilience and our Nation's responsibilities to Tribal communities. She highlighted how Tribal communities, who have centuries of connection to coastal regions, must be actively included in coastal resilience efforts and decision-making. She emphasized the responsibility of all agencies in working with Tribal nations as true partners and in respecting tribal sovereignty and self-governance.

"Consulting with Tribal Governments and building real, meaningful relationships with Tribal communities doesn't just benefit Tribes. It benefits all of us. Each and every one of us has an obligation to engage in meaningful government-to-government consultation when our agencies are engaged in decision making that might affect Tribes." – Elizabeth Klein

Gina McCarthy, Assistant to the President and National Climate Advisor, closed the event with a keynote address in which she highlighted the Administration's commitment to tackling the climate crisis. Ms. McCarthy reiterated the United States' role as a global leader to develop innovative climate solutions, which requires a science-based and proactive whole-of-government response in close collaboration with state, local, and tribal governments.

"We can get our communities to build resilience into the system and into our infrastructure as well. [We can] make sure every word that comes out of our mouth is about people, things they talk about at their kitchen table, and about bringing hope into the Federal government." – Gina McCarthy

The event highlighted two mechanisms for interagency coastal resilience coordination: the National Oceanographic Partnership Program ([NOPP](#)) and the United States Coastal Research Program ([USCRP](#)). Through these two programs, Federal agencies can join other partners to collaboratively address our Nation's most pressing coastal resilience challenges. Scientific efforts funded through NOPP and/or USCRP include basic and applied research projects, workshops, education opportunities, and scientific meetings.

Through a panel discussion and two breakout room discussions, participants shared their capabilities, their dependencies on other agencies, and opportunities for improved collective engagement. Conversations included ideas on how to overcome the barriers to science application and how to better inform basic science of the needs from coastal communities. Participants shared thoughts on how to establish a more "human centric" or "user centric" approach to developing and delivering science and technology that effectively advances users' goals for resilience. This workshop represents one important step in developing a whole-of-government approach to coastal resilience. However, addressing coastal resilience additionally requires government-to-government engagement with Tribal nations, and input from industries, NGOs, coastal communities, and other public stakeholders who are impacted by changing coastal dynamics. Future efforts will incorporate diverse participation to ensure that coastal resilience activities meet the needs of all.